THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI B. SATYANARAYAN REDDY): Mr Chitta Basu, would you like to withdraw your Bill?

SHRI CHITTA BASU: I would not like to withdraw my Bill.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI B. SATYANARAYAN REDDY): All right. I will put it to vote.

The question is:

"That the Bill further to amend the Constitution of India be taken into consideration."

The motion was negatived.

CONSTITUTION (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1987 (TO AMEND ARTICLE 326)

SHRI SATYA PRAKASH MALAVIYA (Uttar Pradesh): Sir, I beg to move:

"That the Bill further to amend the Constitution of India be taken into consideration."

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI HANS RAJ BHARDWAJ): Sir, just one point. There is no Financial Memorandum with the Bill and the honourable Member may be requested to furnish it.

SHRI SATYA PRAKASH MALAVIYA: Yes, Sir. I will furnish it.

Sir, my Bill is a very innocuous one and I think it is the briefest Bill which is for amending the figures "21" to "18" in article 326 of the Constitution. Sir, since my amendment is for reducing the voting age from 21 years to 18 years, I would, first of all, like to read out article 326 of the Constitution. This Constitution was adopted

[**The Vice-Chairman, (Shri H. Hanumanthappa)** in the Chair]

in the year 1949 and it came into force on the 26th January, 1950. Article 326 of the Constitution says:

"326. ELECTION TO THE HOUSE OF THE PEOPLE AND TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLIES OF STATES TO BE ON THE BASIS OF ADULT SUFFRAGE—The elections to the House of the People and to the Legislative Assembly of every State shall be on the basis of adult suffrage; that is to say, every person who is a citizen of India and who is not less than twenty-one years of age on such date as may be fixed in that behalf by or under any law made by the appropriate Legislature and is not otherwise disqualified under this Constitution or any law made by the appropriate Legislature on the ground of non-residence, unsoundness of mind, crime or corrupt or illegal practice, shall be entitled to be registered as a voter at any such election."

Sir, my amendment is only for amending the figure "21 years" to "18 years". In the Statement of Objects and Reasons, I have stated:

"Under the existing provisions of Article 326 of the Constitution, a person who is not less than 21 years of age and is otherwise qualified, is entitled to be registered as a voter. The Joint Committee of both the Houses of Parliament on amendments to Election Laws in February, 1972, recommended that if voting right is granted to persons in the age group of 18 to 21 years, it would give the younger generation a sense of participation in the country's democratic polity. In their opinion there are no valid reasons for denying them the right to vote, particularly when for all practical purposes of law they are treated as majors and are deemed competent to handle their affairs. The Committee therefore, recommended suitable amend-

[Shri Satya Prakash Malviya]

ment of article 326 of the Constitution.

Some State Government such as Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka have already granted voting rights to the citizens who are 18 years of age in relation to elections of Local Bodies. It is, therefore, in the fitness of things that such persons are made eligible to exercise their right of franchise for elections to the State Assemblies and the House of the People (Lok Sabha)."

Sir, during the first Presidential speech of the present Government that is, the 17th January, 1985, to which the hon. Law Minister was referring, the then President while delivering Presidential Address to both the Houses of Parliament said:

"Government are committed to a clean public life. They intend to initiate wide-ranging discussions on electoral reforms with political parties and would welcome their cooperation."

But I am sorry to say that in the Presidential Address in 1986, on the 23rd February, 1987 and 22nd February, 1988 the assurance given to the people of India through our Parliament was forgotten and not a single word was uttered by the President of India for amending the electoral law or electoral reforms. But, Sir, now I am happy to note that recently a committee was appointed by the Congress President under the chairmanship of Shri V. N. Gadgil who is also a member of the other House, and I am told that Mr. Gadgil has recommended that the Government should reduce the voting age from 21 years to 18 years. Sir, earlier in the year 1970 a Petition Committee was appointed and the Petition Committee also recommended that the voting age should be reduced. And on the 18th January, 1985 the Election Commission of India wrote a letter to all the recognized parties and all the recognized State parties, inviting suggestions from them for electoral reforms, and the date fixed was July 16,1985. Every political party submitted suggestions to the Election Commission of India, and now the Election Commission of India has also approved the idea of reviewing the voting age from 21 years to 18 years.

I, therefore, appeal that the Government should consider my constitutional amendment and should accept it.

I will continue on the next date.

5.00 P.M.

SHRI PARVATHANENI UPENDRA (Andhra Pradesh): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, the debate on farmers which has been started and which is presumed to be resumed now may be postponed till after the Diwali holidays. (*Interruptions*). Then, how can you take up the Salaries' Bill first without concluding that debate? What is this?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT): If the hon. Member, Shri Upendra, feels that the Short Duration Discussion which is fixed for today should be postponed to some other day, it can be done. I have no objection. There is no problem. You can have it later on.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI H. HANUMANTHAPPA): If this is the view of the House, then it can be postponed.

Now, we shall take up the Salary, Allowances and Pension of Members of Parliament (Amendment) Bill, 1988.